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Defending Our Nation. Securing The Future.

(U) History Today - 10 July 2014

Run Date: 07/10/2014

(U) After a period of slow advances over the Owen Stanley Mountains in New Guinea, in which U.S. and Australian forces made limited gains at a cost of heavy casualties, the commander of the Southwest Pacific Theater, General Douglas MacArthur, in mid-1944 launched a daring series of amphibious landings behind Japanese lines to capture enemy bases on the north coast of New Guinea.

(U) MacArthur was supported in his decisions by decrypts of Japanese communications that revealed accurate data about enemy strength and deployments. As the battle was being fought, decrypts about movements of enemy reinforcements forward allowed General George Kenney, MacArthur's air officer, to prevent them from intervening in the battle.

(U) The decrypts for planning were produced by Central Bureau (CB), a combined U.S. and Australian cryptologic organization. The commander of CB was Colonel Abraham Sinkov, one of William Friedman's original staff, now in uniform.

(U) As the struggle to control New Guinea continued, CB consistently provided high-quality COMINT to MacArthur and Kenney about the Japanese troop numbers, status, and supply situation. Tactical intercept also was vital to decision making.

(U) A decrypt of a Japanese message sent on May 28 revealed Japanese plans for a counterattack on American positions in the coastal city of Aitape. The Japanese 18th Army listed the supplies it needed for the attack and said that they had to arrive at the port of Wewak by the end of June. A message of June 20 said that the attack was to begin about 10 July, with a strength of 20,000 Japanese troops. This message also explained the deployment of each enemy division in the attack.

(U) The attack happened as described, but the Americans were ready for it. The decrypt of an after-action report from the Japanese commander showed that most Japanese artillery had been destroyed and a large number of troops lost. The supply situation was dire: the commander illustrated this by saying the men had made ten-days' ration of rice last twenty-five days by eating it raw instead of cooking it.

(U) The photograph shows Americans landing at Aitape.

(U) Discuss historical topics with interesting folks. Visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, [*History Rocks*](#) ("go history rocks").

(U) [Larger view of photo](#)

(U) Have a question or comment on "History Today"? Contact us at DL cch or cch@nsa.

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